to the States/UTs against their demand for the above mentioned period of four months.

Buffer stock of foodgrains in the North-Eastcrn Region

3413. SHRI KARNENDU BHATTACHARJEE: Will the Minister of FOOD AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware of the fact that most of the North-Eastern region of the country is inundated by floods every year and no buffer stock of foodgrains is kept to meet the situation leading to unbearable, miseries to the people;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor; and

(c) whether Government propose to create and maintain ample buffer stock of foodgrains in the N.E. region.

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FOOD AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS (SHRI SATYAPAL SINGH YADAV): (a) to (c) It is a fact that many parts of the North Eastern Region are flood prone areas. In view of this the Government endeavour - to create and maintain adequate stock of foodgrains in the North Eastern Region. As on 1st June, 1988 despite various constraints like hilly terrain, law and order sitation, bandhs and landslides there was a stock of 1.67 lakh tonnes of foodgrains including 1.31 lakh tonnes of rice and 36 thousand tonnes of wheat in the Region. Concerted efforts are made to build up a higher level of foodgrains stock, in co-ordination with the Railways and the State Governments concerned.

Skyrocketing prices of essential commodities

3414. SHRI KARNENDU BHATTACHARJEE: Will the Minister of FOOD AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware of the fact that the prices of essential commodities are skyrocketing in the country particularly in Assam, making the life of common man miserable;

(b) if so, whether Government have contemplated any relief measures to give succour to common people; and

(c) if .so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FOOD AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS (SHRI SATYAPAL SINGH YADAV): (a) Prices of certain essential commodities showed an increase in recent weeks due to decline in production, increase in demand, revision of Minimum Support Prices seasonal factors, transportation

bottlenecks and increase in input costs. The increase in prices of essential commodities in Assam is in tune with the general price rise in the country.

(b) and (c) The Government has accorded the highest priority to the control of prices of essential commodities. Apart from certain long term measures to increase the production of essential goods, imports under Open General Licence (OGL), of items which are in short supply like edible oils and pulses are being permitted in order to augment the availability of these items. Recently, the import duty on edible oils has been reduced from 25% to 15%. In order to alleviate problems of high prices of onions in Delhi, action has been taken to distribute onion through public distribution agencies at a subsidised rate of Rs. 10.00 kg. from 14.7.98. Govt, has decided to import 1.5 million tonnes of wheat through State Trading Corporation to augment its availability. Some of the essential commodities like rice, wheat, sugar, imported palmolein and kerosene are also supplied through the Public distribution system and cooperative Stores at below market prices. Stringent actions are being taken against hoarders and black marketeers and others including in unfair trade practices under